



The growlers have found in the failure of "Vera," in the gentle death of "Zenobia" and in the ignominious collapse of the George Edgar Syndicate, grounds for predicting that the present theatrical season will be a most disastrous one. For my own part I see nothing discouraging in any of these failures. "Vera" went to the wall in the first place because it was not a good play as it was represented, and in the second place, because Mr. Portzel did not have enough capital to force the public into a belief that the critics of New York were wrong in their estimate of the play and that Mr. Oscar Wilde and Miss Prescott were right in theirs.

Unfortunately for anything of this kind Portzel had staked all his capital on the first card and when it turned against him he had to retire from the game. Any other supposition as to the causes which led him to the course he adopted would only be to accuse him of being a fool. He had invested largely in a play, which was not without some merit as a source of popular amusement, and he had expended considerable money in presenting that play handsomely at the Union Square Theatre.

The critics justly condemned it, but the public found in it much to applaud. The play was not so rank a failure that it might not have been "doctored" into a paying road piece. Mr. Portzel recognized this fact and admitted as much to me. But in the face of that admission he ruined every chance of getting his money back by taking it off the Union Square stage at the beginning of the second week. As his reason for this he alleged that he did not wish to send good money after bad, and he claimed that he could still take the play on the road and make money. This is all nonsense and Mr. Portzel knows it. If a play will not draw in New York it will not draw anywhere, and if it goes out of this city with the brand of failure upon it the manager might just as well throw it into the waste basket.

But there was another cause, which I fear was more potent than all others in the removal of "Vera" from the stage of the Union Square Theatre. The rent had to be paid and Mr. Sheridan Shook, whom Mr. James W. Collier recently described to me as a man of peculiar financial acumen, refused to open the doors of his theatre until that little formality was adhered to. Poor Portzel had spent so much money in the three months of preliminary advertising and in the presentation of the play, that there was not enough left for the rent. Under such circumstances withdrawal was inevitable.

This seems to me to be the most reasonable explanation of the matter, for if we admit that Portzel still had money, then his course in giving up the fight so easily is only that of a "quitter," as sporting men call horses which will not run and cocks which will not fight. He is simply a dung-hill in the theatrical main.

But whichever conclusion is the correct one, "Vera" is entirely dead in this country as a theatrical attraction, and Mr. Oscar Wilde might as well pack his valise and start back to his native Britain. By the way, this failure seems to have had a most depressing effect upon both him and Miss Prescott. Prior to the production of the play the reporters found Mr. Wilde to be the most accessible of men. He was only too glad to see the representatives of the press and to converse with them upon art in the abstract and especially upon dramatic art. I shall never forget the seraphic smile that spread over his countenance when he said:

"I shall be so glad when this play is produced. It will be such a delightful and such a novel sensation to stand and watch the audience drinking in the sentiment, like thirsty men quaffing at a fountain."

What a pity it was that Oscar's delightful and novel sensation was confined to six nights and a matinee. And I fear that he suffered disappointment even in that short time.

But now the great apostle of aestheticism no longer pines for a newspaper man to talk to. Even the temptation to land Miss Prescott as the greatest of actresses seems to have no influence to draw him from the privacy to which he has sullenly retreated. Nor does Miss Prescott now bother herself to write letters encouraging Mr. Wilde and enquiring upon the beauties of "Vera." Can it be that the opinion of these two distinguished people concerning each other has suffered a change by the failure of the play, in which they were so much interested?

Perhaps not, but I will venture to predict that very little paper will hereafter be consumed by either in writing eulogies of the other. I hear that Mr. Wilde contemplates an early return to England. America will not weep for him. Miss Prescott is too good an actress to be long out of an engagement, and she will, therefore, not suffer greatly. As to Mr. Portzel, I trust that his experience has taught him a lesson. A theatrical manager should have considerable capital to begin with, or else he will probably be forced to the wall. Besides mere speculation is not fair to the actors and actresses who may be engaged. There are enough leeches upon the theatrical body without really good fellows like Portzel placing themselves in the position to be considered such by members of the profession.

The failure of the George Edgar syndicate seems to have crushed everybody concerned with it into silence. They are all back in New York, and it is reported that Miss Sara Jewett is absolutely speechless with anger, while Miss Ada Ward bemoans the relentless fate which so persistently pursues her.

But these are only rumors. As a fact, George Edgar disclaims any intention to misrepresent or to defraud, and says that he was as much taken in as any one else, and I believe Edgar, Young Mr. Davidson, who appears to have been the "syndicate," makes the very serious charge that he discovered that he was being defrauded, and intimates that Mr. Mase Edwards and Mr. Frank Small did not deal fairly by him. Altogether the affair is a very unsavory one, and I feel sorry for the honest people who were misled into it. It will probably be productive of one good, however—it will kill off all embryonic theatrical syndicates which may have been forming in the minds of ignorant young men of speculative tendencies, and in the brains of unscrupulous theatrical managers and agents.

As to the demise of "Zenobia," little need be said. It was worthless as an opera and its fate was a natural consequence. Still Mr. Pratt, its composer, and Mr. Max Strakosch, the manager of the Twenty-third Street Theatre, have had wordy differences concerning the result. Pratt claims that Max did not keep faith with him, and the over buoyant Max laughs and says that Mr.

Pratt is a very nice young man, who writes good music and understands operatic productions. "Zenobia" is a very good opera," he says. "and indeed, if I had \$50,000 which I could spend in no other way, I should like to present Mr. Pratt's opera for a year."

Could anything be more severe than this? It is quite probable, however, that if Mr. Strakosch continues to manage the Twenty-third Street Opera House he will soon have this sum at his disposal, and it is just as probable that he will straightway squander it on "Zenobia."

Now all of these failures were due to two causes—inherent worthlessness and bad management. As is shown by the result, none of these enterprises were legitimate. In the parlance of the profession, they were "snaps," and as such deserved to fail. But how failure for the season can be deduced from such promises surpasses my logical acumen.

Especially is this the case when on the side of success we have arrayed "Excelsior," "Francesca da Rimini," a crowded first week of the season at the Grand Opera House, increased attendance at the Casino and the Madison Square Theatre, a rush at the San Francisco Minstrels and paying business at the other houses that are opened.

If a performance is worth seeing the public will attend it, and if it is not they will not. The failures thus far have merited their fate, and for once I have no sympathy with them. I do not consider it fair to the people of the profession for a man with a few hundred dollars to spend, to speculate upon the time and talents of those people, and I shall be glad if everyone, who undertakes such a game, finds himself bankrupt.

Ned Gilmore is so delighted with the ballet now on the stage at Niblo's that he has purchased a horse for \$1,100 and calls it "Excelsior." He says that if the nag proves to be as great a go as the spectacle no money can buy it. Referring to the entertainment Gilmore said to me yesterday:

"It catches them all, the young and old, babies and grandfathers, the weak and the strong, the halt and the lame and the blind and the deaf and the dumb and everything," and Mr. Gilmore pointed with pride to the door where a stream of people of every description was pouring into the theatre.

"Never in the history of this house," resumed Mr. Gilmore assuming the attitude of an orator, "has such a success been known in New York. Turn them away! Why, my dear fellow, we turn thousands away every night. All the other managers in town grow green with envy whenever they think of the money we are making. Even John Stetson is so moved by the spectacle that he has stopped telling that story about 'when I speak I speak firm.'"

This last evidence of the power of "Excelsior" seemed to be quite conclusive to Mr. Gilmore, although I cannot exactly see why it should be. But then I never heard Mr. Stetson tell that story.

But "Excelsior" is undoubtedly a grand success, a fact attested not only by the smiling faces of the Messrs. Kiralfy and Mr. John F. Poole, but by the crowded audiences which nightly assemble to witness the spectacle. Moreover, it is an entertainment which may be witnessed by anyone. The maiden may see and enjoy it as much as the bald-headed devotee of the ballet. The idea of Darkness being conquered by Light is beautiful and poetic, and it is carried out in beauty and poetry, and this fact is known and felt by the public.

I stood in the lobby yesterday afternoon and watched the people going into the theatre, and was surprised to see the number of ladies and children who attended. The little ones seemed to enjoy the brilliant costumes and the wonderful groupings quite as much as the older people who accompanied them. "Excelsior" is a production which pleases all classes and all ages, and I shall not be surprised if it runs the entire season, as Messrs. Poole and Gilmore predict it will.

In these days of openings for the season I would warn my readers to look out for paint. On the first night of "Vera," at the Union Square, I saw a dozen of ladies and gentlemen with their backs covered with bronze, which had rubbed off on them from the seats, and on the opening night at the Star I was debauched with paint from the same source. As people generally wear their best clothes to the theatre, they might do well to look out for the tardiness of managers in giving the finishing touches to the theatres.

The energetic Mr. Kelly, who proposes to raise Max Strakosch's angel curtain on Mr. W. J. Ferguson's Duda, at the Twenty-third Street Theatre, to-morrow evening, is a famous advertiser. Last week he tried to work the old scheme of robbery on the Press, and now he has dressed up two Chinamen and a negro as dudes, and sends them through the street as an advertisement. They attract considerable attention, but in this instance, as in many others, Mr. Kelly shows himself only to be a very persistent imitator. Nevertheless, I hope that "A Friendly Tip," the play in which Mr. Ferguson is to enact the Duda, will be a success. Such an event would prove beneficial to a number of persons I might mention, not the least among whom is my old friend, Max Strakosch, Esq.

The Grau Opera Company is here with the perennial Almo, the pretty Nixau, the handsome Angole and the homely chorus girls. Maurice is well, and Sam is once more happy, while Comelli and Edgar Strakosch are quite transported. It is the intention to open at the Fifth Avenue Theatre one week from to-morrow, when a new opera by Lecocq will be produced. It is entitled "La Princesse des Canaries," and is in three acts, the libretto being the work of M. M. Chevalot and Duru. It was successfully produced at the Folies Dramatiques last February. Besides the ladies named, M. M. Nigre, Mezieres and Duplan will be in the cast.

The new Broadway entrance into the Fifth Avenue has been cut through and will be entirely completed next week, as will all the improvements in the theatre.

John A. Stevens still feels a resentment against the San Francisco critics, but just now is rejoicing at having caught one of them on the hip. It seems that Stevens was to have produced "Passion's Slave" on a certain night, but at the last moment substituted "Unknown." The next morning the San Francisco Examiner appeared with an elaborate critique of "Passion's Slave," in which the play was torn to tatters and described as utterly worthless. Stevens and Manager Fred Bert consulted the proprietor of the Examiner, and the critic, whose name is Chretien, was discharged. Stevens says this is only a little laugh, but that he enjoys it.

Mr. Edward S. Kilder enjoys the distinction of being both a playwright and a poet. He has lately written a play for Salisbury's Troubadours, and more lately still, has written a poem, which he sends to me. I have ordered it "set" in prose form, because it accords more with the space at my command in that shape. Still its beauties must be apparent to every one. Mr. Kilder calls it "An Actor's Holiday," and sweetly sings as follows:

A trifle to the band upon the steamer, Though its playing, I acknowledge, gives me pain; I never wish to see a "Pansy Blossom" or a "Violet Sweet," or otherwise, again. A "quar-

ter" for my dip into the ocean. There to struggle with the undertows and cramps. Diving in among that army in commotion. Dressed in bathing cap and fitted for the traps, A dime to view the Camera Obscura. Another for a stool upon the Pier—A friend? ah, that means Pomery and chicken; I had intended chowder and the beer; A sent to see the pyrotechnic splendors. Though the bombs and rockets ever must be free, then doles far niente, where the music kings far across the billows of the sea. Another hour to view the wily savage, in paint and feathers sturdily appear To shoot but never kill the mighty hunter And lasso-rate the offensive steer! Then homeward through a broad expanse of water, As noble as the "everlasting hills." With memories of a day of perfect pleasure At smaller cost than that of doctors' bills!

To-morrow night two brand new theatres throw open their doors to New York. These are Mr. and Mrs. McKee Rankin's Third Avenue Theatre, at the corner of Third avenue and 31st street, and Harry Miner's People's Theatre, at the corner of Spring street and the Bowery. The Rankins open with Joseph Jefferson in "Rio Van Winkle," and the People's will offer "The Lights of London" as its first attraction.

I attended the informal reception at the former place last Friday night, and was much pleased with the construction and finish of the house. It is cozy and comfortable, and as the booking is unusually strong the management is extremely hopeful of success. Mr. Frank Curtis is the acting manager, and is thoroughly competent to fill the position. He is gentlemanly, shrewd and quick-witted, and has had much experience in theatrical matters. If theatrical success can be achieved on Third avenue I believe that Curtis will win at the new theatre.

The following correspondence explains itself:

14TH STREET THEATRE,
NEW YORK, Aug. 30, 1883.

George Edgar, Esq.,
DEAR SIR:—In view of the late misfortune attending the enterprise known as the George Edgar Shakespearean Combination, I have to say that I have the week commencing September 10 at the 14th Street Theatre at my disposal, and will place the same at your service for the bare expenses attending the performances by the principal members of your company, thus affording an opportunity for yourself and co-workers to establish artistic claim for the patronage of the public. The time intervening being very short for elaborate stage production, will claim indulgence for the public, which I believe will be given, but nothing will be left undone on my part to give your pieces creditable stage settings. Very truly yours,
SAMUEL COLVILLE.

68 WEST 37TH STREET,
NEW YORK, August 30, 1883.

Samuel Colville, Esq., Manager 14th Street Theatre.
MY DEAR SIR:—I can simply say in acknowledgment of your kind offer, conveyed in your letter of this date, that I accept, and will present the Shakespearean Combination and myself with two or three exceptions of the members thereof, which I will substitute with Miss Elsie Wilton and Mr. Lewis Morrison, both Metropolitan favorites. I will play "Othello" and "Richelieu." Very truly and sincerely yours,
GEORGE EDGAR.

The many friends of Mr. George Edgar will be delighted with this arrangement, and I hope that the venture will prove successful.

A week of the emotional pressure of the "Hand" and the musical bent of the "Heart" at Daly's Theatre has served to make me fully agree with my friend the musical critic of the *Dramatic News*, as to the complete success of Lecocq's charming operette, and especially as to the excellent training of the chorus, the brightness of costumes and scenery and the triumph of Miss Conroy over the adverse criticism of her past. With pretty Louise Paullin and popular J. H. Ryley in the cast in addition "Heart and Hand" ought to receive through the coming week the same mood of approbation which the public gave to its performance all last week.

LOBBY LOUNGE.

Notes.

Commodore "Jonchm" Tooker has rented out his talents to Lester Wallace for the coming season. Tooker knows how to advertise.

Billy Birch's Minstrels are reaping a veritable harvest at the San Francisco Hall. The entertainment is exceptionally good.

The sale of seats for "The Merry Duchess" will begin next Tuesday. The cast will be as follows: Brabazon Sykes, Henry E. Dixey, Freddy Bowman, John Nash, Farmer Bowman, Edward Connell, Sir Lothbury Jones, W. Forrester, Captain Walker, Walt Hampshire, Lord John, J. Watson, Inspector Green, W. Jones, Alderman Gog, W. Dohman, The Triesner, G. Wilson, the Duchess of Epsom Downs, Mme. Selina Dolaro, Rowena (her first appearance in New York), Miss Louise Lester, Dorothy Bowman, Miss Jean Delmar, Ethelfreda, Miss Sophia Hummel.

This week the "Rajah" will enter upon the fourth month of its successful run at the Madison Square Theatre. Miss Marion Elmore will enter the cast on Monday week (September 10). The 10th performance will take place on Tuesday, September 11.

W. J. Ferguson will appear at the 23d Street Theatre on Monday night in his new play, "A Friendly Tip." His impersonation of the Duda has met with great success in Baltimore, where he has been playing all the past week.

The Celtic Musical Union is trying to secure for the Irish musical festival in October a young Dublin lady, who is said to possess a wonderful soprano voice and is one of the best ballad singers since the days of Catherine Hayes. She will also create the part of Adela in MacSwiney's opera of "Amergin," to be given in this city next Spring.

Mr. John Jack will appear in the Mount Morris Theatre during the week as Sir John Falstaff, supported by Miss Annie Firmin as Prince Hal, in Shakespeare's "King Henry IV."

"Prince Methusalem" is still a potent attraction at the Casino.

Mr. Anson Pond's Drama "Her Atonement," will be produced at the Grand Opera House to-morrow evening. Elaborate preparations have been made for this production, and there is no doubt that it will prove as highly successful as it did last season at Niblo's Garden.

"Nobody's Claim" will be the attraction at the Windsor Theatre this week.

The last performance of "The Wild West" occurs at Coney Island to-day.

Mr. Rudolph Aronson's orchestra will be increased to 50 musicians at to-night's concert at the Casino, and by general request Rubenstein's charming ballet "Bai Costumo" will be repeated. The programme also includes the overture from "Rienzi," the "Marche Indienne" from "L'Africain," selections from "Carmen" and "The Queen's Lace Handkerchief," overture to "William Tell," and Rudolph Aronson's Casino Waltz, besides miscellaneous selections. Good, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Gung and now many by Suppe. The pleasant roof garden will be open and be brilliantly illuminated as usual.

Roland Reed, who played a very successful engagement at the 14th Street Theatre last Spring, will present "Check" at the People's Theatre, on September 10.

"The Rector" is the title of a recent London success about to take the road under the management of Matthew Brennan. It was written by Pinero, the author of "The Squire," produced at Daly's last season, and will have a strong cast, including Sara Jewett and Gus Lovick.

The "Frolics of a Day," in which the Frank Majilton English Comedy Company are to appear next week at the 14th Street Theatre, is a comedy farce of the "Pink Dominoes" order, and is described as a prolonged roar—a sustained scream of delight, in three acts. The grotesque dancing introduced in the Cremerne masquerade scene by Mr. Frank Majilton and his associates is also said to be wonderfully clever.

Koster & Bial's concert hall opened last night with a large audience. The place has been entirely remodeled inside, and a number of boxes have been added in the galleries. Miss Juliette Laurence made her reappearance, after an absence of two years, and received a warm welcome. Miss Hortense made her first appearance, and her reception was most cordial. A special feature of the performance was the Spanish ballet, with Miss Adele Marinetti as premier danseuse. The artists last night appeared in some disavantaged position, owing to the fact that they had to face the audience in bowing their acknowledgments.

Brooklyn Theatrical Notes.

At Colonel Sinn's Park Theatre Mr. Edwin Thorne and a carefully selected company appear this week in "The Black Flag." With accustomed enterprise Colonel Sinn has made arrangements to have the original scenery and appointments brought to Brooklyn which were

used when the play was first produced at the Union Square Theatre. The patrons of the Park may therefore look forward to a stage setting, which, coupled with the ability of Mr. Thorne and his company, should make the production of "The Black Flag" something to be seen and remembered. Next week "Hearts of Oak" will be the attraction.

At Haverly's Theatre "The Silver King" will be retained on the Boards for another week. The play is running smoothly, and the different artists are well up in their parts. This is notably the case with Miss Eleanor Carey and Mr. Walker Bentley, whose portrayal of the characters of Nellie and Wilfred Denver is received at every performance with the utmost favor by large and discriminating audiences. A word of praise is also due to Harry Rich and Charles G. Craig for their clever interpretation of the parts of Jaikos and Captain Skinner respectively. The play is mounted with the taste and liberality which have characterized all of the Brooklyn Theatre productions since Mr. W. A. McConnell assumed the management of the house. The Brooks and Dickson Company No. 1, in "The Roman Rye," opens Monday, September 10.

Hyde and Bohman's Variety Theatre in Adams street has been crowded every night and at three matinee performances during the past week. This week Harry Miner's Comedy Four Company appear, and as the patrons of the house are always in town, a repetition of last week's business may be anticipated.

The Standard Museum at No. 434 Fulton street has been attracting the ladies and children of some of the best families in Brooklyn at two performances daily during the past week. The museum is a sight in itself, but Mr. Holmes, the energetic proprietor, also furnishes his patrons with a variety show of great excellence, and that without any advance on the admission fee of one dime. Mr. Holmes deserves great credit for the enterprise displayed by him in giving so much for so little money.

The Novelty Theatre, which is situated in the Eastern District, and has been under the management of Messrs. Theall and Williams for several years, has been made, during the summer recess, one of the prettiest theatres in Brooklyn. The opening attraction to-morrow night will be "The Roman Rye," and all of the best attractions in the country have been booked for subsequent dates.

The Grand Opera House, in Elm Place, was opened last evening. The auditorium has a seating capacity greater than the Academy of Music, and every foot of room was occupied. The decorations and the improvements in the seating of the lower part of the house were the subjects of general commendation, and Messrs. Knowles & Morris were heartily congratulated on the appearance of their beautiful theatre. Augustin Daly's "Pique" was the play presented, and it may be inferred from the phenomenal cast engaged in its rendition that it was played for all it is worth. Miss Agnes Booth played Mabel Renfrow, Miss Sydney Cowell, Kate; Charles Wheatleigh and Walden Ramsay, Matthew and Captain Standish respectively. The minor parts were all acceptably filled.